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Lithuanians in Vilnius fill canisters with gasoline after expiration of Gorbachev's deadline for rescinding of certain laws.

Lithuania Offers Several Changes

Rights, Citizenship Compromises Signalled

By David Remnick
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, April 16—The Lithuanian leadership, facing the threat of an economic blockade, signalled today that it is ready to compromise on several crucial issues in its five-week confrontation with the Kremlin over the republic's bid for independence.

Lithuanian Prime Minister Kazimera Prunskiene said that in response to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's ultimatum last week, the legislature was prepared to consider new laws protecting the rights of all people on Lithuanian soil and allowing individuals to remain Soviet citizens even in an independent republic.

She said the republic would also permit its young men to serve in the Red Army if they chose and would search for a "compromise" on the division of property between the national Communist Party and the Lithuanian Communist Party,

which broke away from Moscow last December.

Although Prunskiene said a blockade imposed from Moscow would "constitute a cold, and very harsh, war against the people of Lithuania," she also noted that the Kremlin's latest threat was "a step forward in a way" because it did not demand that Lithuania repeal its March 11 declaration of independence. The republic's president, Vytautas Landsbergis, said that if Moscow did close off Lithuania's borders, "we will consider it a form of aggression."

Prunskiene also said the republic's legislature needed more details on Moscow's threat of an economic blockade before it could respond adequately. Last Friday, Gorbachev issued his strongest warning to Lithuania, saying that unless Vilnius rescinded within 48 hours various laws violating the U.S.S.R. constitution, Moscow would begin stopping shipments of strategic goods, including oil and gas, which could be

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sold elsewhere for freely convertible currency.

Prunskiene said today she saw no sign of any supplies being withheld beyond "the normal shortages within the Soviet system."

The Soviet president is unlikely to be soothed entirely either by Prunskiene's suggestions or by a telegram the Lithuanian leadership sent today after an emergency meeting. The telegram said the Lithuanians "see no other solution to these problems other than the quick acceptance of the Lithuanian delegation in Moscow" and that they have instructed all enterprises in the republic to fulfill their contracts with Moscow. Lithuanian exports mainly agricultural products to the other republics.

The Lithuanian parliament reconvenes Tuesday and is expected to send a separate reply to Gorbachev.

Prunskiene's suggestions for compromise touch on some of the most sensitive differences between Moscow and Vilnius.

Moscow, in articles and broadcasts in the official media, has claimed that the Lithuanian declaration of independence ignores the rights of the Russians, Poles and other ethnic minorities in the republic. A law on equal rights of citizens, as well as one allowing people to retain Soviet citizenship, would be directed at undermining such charges of discrimination. In the telegram, the Lithuanian leadership said that no more than 10 percent of the republic's 3.8 million people want to retain their Soviet citizenship.

Earlier the Lithuanian leaders

were calling for a boycott of the spring military draft. Today's statement represents less of a hard line and may be a conciliatory gesture to the Soviet military, which has been particularly angered by the secession crisis.

Soviet troops have seized Communist Party buildings in the republic, claiming they are the property of the national party. A compromise on that issue may lessen the military presence in the Lithuanian capital.

So far, Moscow has refused negotiations with the Lithuanians, saying they would not hold formal talks until Vilnius agreed to pursue secession according to a new law passed in Moscow providing for a referendum and a five-year transition period.

The Lithuanian legislature has refused, saying it is only prepared to negotiate the terms of independence and the future economic and political relationship "of two equal states." Lithuania maintains that it and its sister Baltic republics of Estonia and Latvia were illegally incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940.

Deputy Prime Minister Romualdas Ozolas said today that Lithuania and Estonia have appointed and exchanged ambassadors.

Ozolas said on local television that Lithuanians should avoid panic and urged them to avoid hoarding. He said that the republic could withstand a total economic blockade for one month.

Landsbergis said Lithuania is attempting to contract directly with enterprises in various parts of the country for its supplies, according to Edward Tuskenis, a spokesman quoted by the Associated Press.